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Draft report

Addendum

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Programme questions

Proposed revision to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Programme 27. General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference services

1. At its 16th meeting, on 15 June 1998, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. The Committee had before it the proposals in respect of programme 27, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference services.

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced programme 27 and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. The proposed revisions were generally supported in view of the work undertaken by the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and the efforts demonstrated in improving its work. The view was expressed that the narrative in paragraph 27.8 duplicated that of paragraph 27.6, which already covered the technical servicing of organs and subsidiary organs. The concern was expressed that the narrative in paragraph 27.8 also duplicated the narrative of section 2B, Disarmament, of the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, as approved by the General Assembly in annex III to its resolution 52/220 of 22 December 1997, entitled "Questions relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999". The view was also expressed

98-18017 (E) 240698

that a certain overlap and duplication of functions existed between programmes and that this particular programme seemed to be without an identity – a programme that includes political, economic and service activities without concentrating on any one of them. Consequently, while the programme may have been set up with the best of intentions, in practice it might not reflect the best course of action for the Organization. There were suggestions that the Committee recommend that the Office of Internal Oversight Services and/or the Joint Inspection Unit undertake a study on the reform in order to determine whether its method of implementation was best for the Organization.

4. Queries were also raised on paragraph 27.10 on the role of the programme as it related to conducting research and preparing analytical studies on the application and interpretation of the provisions of relevant articles of the Charter of the United Nations. In connection with paragraph 27.11, assurances were requested from the Secretariat for the timely issuance of documentation and on strict compliance with the six-week rule for submission of documentation to legislative bodies. In that context, appreciation was expressed on steps being taken by the Department, in coordination with other offices and departments, to ensure compliance with the requirements for the timely issuance of documentation.

5. The view was expressed that the General Assembly attached serious importance to the implementation of its resolutions and decisions, and therefore the current mechanism for the timely action by relevant Secretariat bodies should be strengthened and made more effective.

6. The view was expressed that the development of new conference servicing policies, as mentioned in paragraph 27.14 (b), was the prerogative of the relevant intergovernmental bodies.

7. Grave concern was expressed at the proposed deletion of "all six official languages" in paragraph 27.16 (a). It was stressed that the six official languages should be given equal treatment, as requested in part B of General Assembly resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997. The Committee's attention was drawn to significant errors in the translation of the text of the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan, which in most instances were not merely editorial, but which affected the substance of the narrative. It was pointed out that already-approved texts of reports and resolutions were the subject of lengthy efforts during deliberations by Member States and that efforts should be made towards strict utilization of existing negotiated texts in the language versions.

8. Regarding paragraph 27.19, the view was expressed that while the application of advanced electronic information management and communication technology was important, the more traditional form of documentation should be given equal importance.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly the approval of the proposed revisions to programme 27, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference services, subject to the following modifications.

Paragraph 27.6

***After* Indian Ocean *add* as well as meetings of States parties and other international meetings related to multilateral disarmament agreements;**

Paragraph 27.8

***Delete* the paragraph.**

Paragraph 27.12

Delete **all** ***after*** **implementation of** ***and before*** **General Assembly**

Subparagraph 27.16 (a)

Insert **in all six official languages of the United Nations** ***after*** **produced**

Delete **is of high quality and**

10. The Committee also recommended to the General Assembly that in the year 2002, programme 27, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference services, be subject to evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services for consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-second session.